

Precious

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What happens if the population of Gensokyo increases? And what goes on in the lives who cause as such?

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Contest

Chapter 1: Contest

It doesn't take long until they pass by the large, colorful banner proudly proclaiming the annual newspaper contest. Both freeze - both stare.

Silence, for a moment. Then,

"I know we're married and all, and Ryouko's probably going to be pissed at both of us for the hundredth time, but that's not going to stop me from totally winning again this year."

A rare smirk creeps up Hatate's face. Her eyes flicker downwards slightly - the deadline is on the twenty-fourth of December, as always, and it's March right now. More than enough time. "Let's see you back up your words."

"Hata, *please*, I've won against you seven years in a row. What difference will this one make?" Aya sneers. If this had happened nine years before, the brunette would have given up on the contest then and there. Thankfully, she's a little less of her old self now.

"The difference is that we now have studying children who will annoy you to make sure you don't get any headway at all."

"You think they're going to take your side, huh?! I'll have you know, Sayaka loves me like heck!"

"Ryouko's more helpful in this sort of thing, you understand?"

"The guard tengu? Oh, please, she can't write a paragraph to save her life. Remember last year? I just barely made it through..."

They both spare the banner one last glance, etching every detail of it into memory, before racing off to their home to prepare. They're not about to let the other win - especially Hatate, who knows the odds are stacked against her. This, after all, happens every year, and their elder child, Shameimaru Ryouko, is on the brunette's side this time. She's going to have to do something a little... drastic.

Desperate times call for desperate measures, after all.

"But... But I don't want to," the seven-year-old Ryouko pleads softly, though both of them know that Hatate will have her way. Slowly.

The brunette rubs the top of her daughter's head just the way she likes it - she takes too much after her Aunt Momiji, really. "I know it's hard for you, but don't you want to show your sister you can be good at writing too? She's younger than you by a whole year, after all, surely you can do better than her this year."

Ryouko sniffs. She's not typically a crying sort of person, but she's always been sensitive about her writing skills (or lack thereof).

"We're gonna lose and she's gonna make fun of me again."

"No, I'll make sure neither of those two are going to do any such thing to you." With a heave, she carries the young tengu and plops her on a too-high chair. This feels slightly disconcerting, almost like she's imprisoning her own child, but she can't be blamed. The tengu take their newspaper contests quite seriously. "I know you want to be a mountain guard when you grow up, but it doesn't hurt to be able to write even just a little, right? I'll help you, and we can win against those two."

Ryouko goes quiet, before she finally rubs at her face, not quite crying just yet, and then nods. "Okay."

"Wonderful." A smile, maybe too big, springs onto Hatate's face. "Now, here's what we'll do. Aya's been doing the same thing for years, and we've never won against that, so let's counter it with this..."

Sayaka bounces into the room in her six-year-old enthusiasm, grin spread wide on her face. "Mom, mom - something cool happened at school today! Auntie Momi was invited as a guest person!"

At the sound of Momiji's name, both Ryouko and Aya perk up from their works, yesterday's homework and this month's paper respectively. "Aunt Momiji?" Ryouko repeats, blinking curiously at her sister. "What'd she do?" The elder sibling had gone down with a cold recently, and Aya had vehemently refused she go to school.

"She talked 'bout being a sentry guard on the mount'n and everything about it," Sayaka excitedly narrates, waving her arms around. "She was soooo cool! She de-mun-stray-ted some danmaku techniques! Like, *whoosh* and *kabloosh* ! Her bullets were so pretty!"

"I wish I went to school today," Ryouko mutters, glancing over at Aya heatedly, who pats the young tengu and tells her to do her homework for today. And suddenly, Hatate notices - that's exactly what she needs. Although she hadn't been paying very much attention to Sayaka's story, now's the time to enact her little plan. Namely: Give Ryouko a reason to come out on top in the contest.

Hatate clears her throat without sounding at all suspicious, grabbing the attention of all three crow tengu in the room. "Sayaka - tell us more about what Auntie Momi talked about?" She smiles, trying not to sound horribly off-topic.

Sayaka nods, happy to be in the spotlight. "Yeah, yeah! So, like, she came to our school 'cause the teacher wanted us to know more 'bout what goes on in the mountain, so she called Auntie Momi 'cause she

was the only one not busy that time. And Auntie Momi went on and on about the rules and everythin' 'bout the mountain sentries, and it was kinda boring 'cause I already knew everything 'cause big sis keeps *telling* me about it..."

By her spot on the floor, Ryouko quietly seethes at Aya, who pointedly keeps her gaze away from the elder sibling. "I'm going to school *tomorrow*," she says with an air of finality, before heading back upstairs with her addition homework. "Mum, can you help me study?"

"Of course."

By the tone of her voice, though, Hatate knows they're not going to be studying what seven plus five is equal to. Hatate writes enough for a normal full-length article with Ryouko egging her on until it's dinnertime.

Aya, of course, isn't slacking off either.

The moment Hatate and Ryouko vacate the room, she brings herself to sit on the couch with Sayaka, who looks politely confused at the sudden motion. "Mom?"

"Shh," she whispers, planting a kiss on the younger tengu's forehead. Sayaka lets out a squeak of laughter, but doesn't say anything else. Aya grins. "Don't you think it's the perfect time to study, too?"

"I don't *wanna* study," Sayaka whines. "Our homework is to read a bunch of boring stories and they're all super *boring* ! I like your articles better, mom!"

She doesn't bother keeping the stupidly big, goofy grin off of her face as she scoops Sayaka up onto her lap. "Not exactly what I meant, ya

little cheek - and you probably shouldn't say that around mum. She'd lecture your face off. Now let's get to writing, yeah? You said Momi went over to demonstrate stuff?"

"What does 'lec-cher' mean?" Large red eyes blink up at Aya, who rummages around her drawers for some spare sheets of blank paper. "Is it when mum goes on those super long and boring talks on how I shouldn't pro-cras-ti-nate on my homework again?"

"You can put it that way." She retrieves a pencil from nowhere - one of the perks of living in this house.

"Wah! What does that mean?" Once she understands what her mother is doing, however, Sayaka immediately starts bouncing on Aya's knee in cheer. The reporter tries not to wince in pain and struggles to keep her smile intact. "Oh! Oh, we're gonna *write* again! I'm so excited! Mom, mom, let's write about Auntie Momi going to school today!"

Aya laughs and ruffles her younger daughter's hair. "That's what I thought."

By the time the results are announced, tengu of all kinds are scrambling over one another to see who won first place. Hatate sits down on a bench near the large scoreboard and flicks through the spirit images she took to check the results. Ryouko patiently waits beside her, looking over her mother's shoulder every now and then as inconspicuously as possible. Of course, Hatate notices, but she doesn't really care (besides the fact that yes, it's rather cute).

And finally, she reaches Aya's name. Her eyes widen - she saw Aya's name first. She was going in chronological order, which meant

"Oh," Hatate says.

"Oh?" Ryouko peers over at her mother's eccentrically designed camera, then gasps at the sight. "Oh!"

"... Oh." The brunette blinks - it's never happened before. Why would it happen now? Maybe her camera had malfunctioned. A visual error. That happened all the time. Usually not on something so important such as this, but...

"Hey--! Hatatan, Ryouko!" A loud voice calls. Hatate doesn't need to look up to know it's Aya, but she does smile at Ryouko when the elder sibling looks up at Aya slack-jawed. The reporter skids to a stop on the ground, black crow wings flickering for a moment before disappearing entirely. Looking confused, she peeks down to look at her wife's screen. "What's all this about? Oh, you got the results!"

Hatate nods numbly. "I... did."

"Who won? Who won?" Aya asks excitedly, quickly accompanied by Sayaka's enthusiastic squealing- she *swears*, those two are mirror images of each other.

The brunette pauses, not sure if she should recheck the results, before allowing a simple smile on her face. This was probably a sign - a sign of things to come, either for them or for their children. And it was so, oh so delicious. Hatate hands her camera over to the expecting Aya, who checks the photo with fervor - and promptly drops her jaw.

It takes a few moments to calm both Aya and Sayaka down, even with sane little Ryouko's help, but when they do, Sayaka is jumping around and flapping her tiny wings while clinging to her elder sister the whole while. And Aya - she wraps Hatate up in a bone-crushing hug and whispers, "Must've let my guard down."

Hatate breathes a shaky breath before returning the hug, if rather weakly. "I like to think I'm just good like that."

"Don't you dare be a cute lil' shit," Aya growls with a hint of play in her voice, and before Hatate can grace the statement with a response, her wife is kissing her like there's no tomorrow. The brunette can faintly hear Sayaka's 'ewww ' and Ryouko's groan, but nothing else matters except for this wonderful person she doesn't deserve standing right before her.

11th :: Shameimaru Aya

11th :: Shameimaru Hatate

Dolls

Chapter 2: Dolls

Arnika Margatroid, much of her life, and a long-awaited visit.

(See the end of the chapter for notes.)

"Your mother's coming over today, sweetie," Koakuma says, black dress twirling around her as she swoops to lift Arnika onto her chair by the study table. The purple-haired eleven-year-old brightens considerably at the mention of her other parent.

"Is - Is she really?!" Arnika exclaims, just barely managing to keep her voice down. *Don't be loud in the library, don't be loud in the library...* "Is she bringing any of her... her *dolls*?" she whispers, saying 'dolls' as if it were a sacred word.

Koakuma giggles, placing some books back on the shelf, then places her pointer finger to her lips in a 'hush' gesture. "I can't say. She'll be arriving at around three, though. She'll be coming with Aunt Marisa as well, so be a good girl, okay? I know Aunt Marisa's always teaching you new spells, but those aren't usually good influences unlike what Mum always teaches, alright?"

Arnika nods, all too excited. She knows she'll forget about Koakuma's warning once Aunt Marisa brings out her super-cool grimoire anyway. "I promise, I promise. Oh!" Her voice rises by an octave, and she quickly lowers it to the best of her abilities. "What about - can I show them Sayo?"

"Oh, of *course* you can, dear," the demon says, looking almost as gleeful as Arnika. She bends down to plant a kiss on the young

dollmaker's forehead, smiling at the giggle she elicits. "Mother will be so proud of you."

Arnika is bouncing around a little too wildly in the library at the thought of her other parent visiting, but she does try to calm down for Mum's sake. She sneaks off into her little corner of the library and makes a few touches on Sayo's outfit. She's always wanted to make dolls and put on puppet shows in the village like Mother always does, and with Sayo, she's one step closer to her dream.

And what if she could do the same thing as Mother and make an *autonomous* doll, too? She's giddy all over just thinking about it. In fact, her hands are shaking - or is it just cold...? Arnika casts a glance outside a nearby window - it looks like it's going to be the winter season soon. All the more reason to stay inside all the time.

She's wanted to go visit Mother herself, of course - but she's not *old* enough yet, not strong enough to traverse the Forest of Magic by herself, not even if she brings big sis Koa with her or even Mum. They're always *preoccupied*, always *busy*, that Arnika never really gets to see her Mum as much as she used to. She doesn't even know *what* they're always so busy with, even - just that they look like they're planning something big and Arnika isn't in on it. It makes her all huffy at the thought, so she stops thinking about it and returns her concentration to little Sayo. Right. Just focus on Sayo and her clothes. Much more productive than Mum and big sis Koa and *business*...

Granted, she *could* play with big sis Ranishi whenever she comes over to visit - and she visits *a lot* . But big sis Ranishi always knows where to find her during hide-and-seek and where she's going to go during tag with her stupid floating eyeball, so Arnika stopped playing with her altogether. Then big sis Ranishi started hanging out with the singing bird youkai outside, and so Arnika stopped seeing her at all.

It's so *disheartening* that she doesn't have any friends her age. Even with big sis Koa always taking care of her, it doesn't *feel* like a

friendship. Like an obligation - or something.

But Mother *never* misses out on a visit even when she says she's super busy like when she talks to Mum through telepathy - Arnika's learned a long time ago how to tune in to telepathic signals. (It's fun, but it makes her all guilty afterwards, so she doesn't use it as much as she wants to.) When Mum found out she'd been listening all this time, she got really mad, but didn't yell - thank goodness! Instead, though, Arnika was forced to be sat down and lectured for a very long and very boring time. She listened, really, she did, but it wasn't like she could help herself when it came to Mother.

And Mother brings her friends along sometimes - there's always Aunt Marisa, who taught her how to make pretty star danmaku and how to steal books under Mum's nose. Sometimes there's Aunt Reimu, who's really 'chill' (Aunt Marisa says that all the time and she's so cool when she does it) and gave Arnika some ribbons to dress up her dolls. There was this one time when a tall woman with black hair came along with her daughter - Arnika remembers her name was Sayaka, or something - and they were called 'crow tengu' - she learned that from Mum's lesson. Sayaka - or something - played with her long enough for Arnika to get super tired, and so they both sat down and made dolls. Sayaka taught her how to fly high enough to reach the top of the bookshelves, which made both Mum, Mother, and Sayaka's mother to freak out.

It hadn't been *that* alarming a sight, had it? Two seven-year-olds nearly eight feet high? Well, it did take a while for them to get down when Arnika found out that they were *really* high up, but, oh well.

When they left - Sayaka and her mother - they didn't come back anymore. It made Arnika sad - she played with another of her age for the first time since big sis Ranishi and then they never come back. Ah - she did leave an important skill to fly eight feet high, though. That had been fun.

She looks down at Sayo in her hands - she'd modeled the appearance after Sayaka, from what little she could remember (*light*

brown hair, and a scarf, and then pretty red eyes), but she wanted to make a cool person - Aunt Marisa mentioned the term once. A super-person? Superhero? Something like that. A 'warrior of justice' - big sis Koa suggested that. It sounded nice, so Arnika dubbed Sayo as such. Sayo, the Warrior of Justice! --It felt nice.

Anyway, she wanted Sayo to look cool and a little like Aunt Reimu, 'chill' - so she added a white cape, because she remembers Aunt Reimu has these white things dangling from her arms that look kind of funny, but Arnika's not allowed to laugh at them. Then she decides Sayo's weapon to be a sword, because Sayaka mentioned her Auntie Momi - whoever that is - uses a sword for her weapon and she's super cool. And so Sayo is now 'cool', by Arnika's standards. She's rather proud, actually. Is this how Mother feels every time she makes a doll? If so, she likes the feeling. She'd like to feel it again. But for now, Sayo needs to be enchanted with the help of a funny book called a grimoire.

Or something.

'What did Aunt Marisa say back then? You gotta wait for her to let her guard down, and then strike. Yes, yes. Distract her if you can. That makes the attempt more likely to succeed. Gotta wait. Gotta be patient, or else she'll notice you and take action. Not good. Gotta wait... '

Mum has a *lot* of books - she insists Arnika call them 'grimoires', because that's the 'proper term'. The word tastes funny on her tongue, and it's the same thing anyway if she calls them books. But Mum says they're grimoires, so obviously they're grimoires. Arnika stopped bothering a long time ago.

But there's one grimoire in particular that Arnika wants this time - thanks to her luck, it's on Mum's table, on the stack of other books - grimoires, that is, and they all look horrifyingly similar. Arnika's learned how to differentiate certain grimoires from other grimoires,

though, which is very good - if she hadn't, she wouldn't have been able to do *anything* in the library, and that didn't sound like fun at *all* .

In any case, Mum's not paying very much attention to the stack of grimoires on her table - rather, she looks very busy with an unusual-looking book, one Arnika doesn't know about. It looks like one of Mother's grimoires, the brown ribboned one, but she can't be so sure. After all, she's barely seen it. Mum's clearly absorbed in her studying, though, because when Arnika totters over to her, she barely looks up.

"Mum?"

Mum shifts, her gown swishing slightly as she looks over at Arnika's general direction tiredly. She winces - those are some nasty circles under Mum's eyes. Maybe she needs a nap or two... or five.

"Arnika?"

"Yes, it's me, Mum," the young dollmaker says, trying to be patient. She's fidgeting slightly - she's really, *really* excited. "Mother's coming today." Her hands rest on the table as casually as possible. Mum doesn't seem to suspect a thing. Good!

Mum nods, looking like she's about to doze off. Arnika wouldn't be surprised if she does. "Yes, she told me." Then she smiles, which is something the dollmaker hasn't seen for some time. "Excited, aren't you?"

"Yeah," Arnika says, and this time she can't keep the grin off of her face. Carefully, oh-so-slowly, she takes out the grimoire, easing it out of its spot in the stack. "I'm - I'm gonna show her Sayo. And then - I'm gonna ask her to teach me more." A yawn escapes Mum's mouth, to which Arnika frowns at. "Have you been getting enough sleep?"

"Not very." She raises her tired lavender eyes up at her daughter, who has her brow furrowed and looking very exasperated. "I've been working very hard with something, your mother and Koakuma and I.

Don't worry - once I'm done with it, I can start teaching you how to enchant your dolls."

Bright blue eyes widen - did she really hear that right? "Enchant - ?"

"Yes." Another smile. "It's going to be a little tedious, especially for children your age - but I think you'll like it."

"I'll love it," Arnika blurts out before she can stop herself, because *did Mum really just say that?* "T... Thanks, Mum." She wishes she can jump towards her Mum and hug her with everything she's got, but poor little Mum looks like she could crumble at any moment. "Thanks," she says again, for good measure.

Patchouli Margatroid's smile widens. "Your mother's on her way."

She has the grimoire in her hands, now, but she's going to have to hurry with the enchanting - Mum *did* say it wouldn't be long until Mother comes to the mansion. So she reads over the incantation, skims through the description to make sure she's performing the right magic, then quietly chants the incantation under her breath.

Sayo, who's been sitting in front of her since she started, starts glowing. Not very brightly, just bright enough to not attract attention from big sis Koa or Mum. Once she finishes the chant, Sayo begins to float a little, then dims down until the light disappears entirely. Arnika's a little worried the spell won't work, but she's practiced this on other inanimate objects before, but then again...

Sayo remains in the air, floating. Her white cape hovers in the air behind her, suspended, in a 'cool' way. A childish smile blossoms on Arnika's face as she mentally tells Sayo to move left. The doll does so.

After a little bit of squealing, and a little bit of fooling around, Arnika hears the library door click. Her ears have tuned in to pick up that sound, and since the library is so quiet, there's really no other sound

aside from the door, big sis Koa's shuffling around, and the crinkling of pages turning. She hurriedly tells Sayo to sit on her shoulder, and *oh gosh*, she's so cute when she does exactly that... !

Shaking her head, Arnika makes her way towards the library doors. It's time, it's time, it's time. Mother's here.

"Mother!" She squeaks, barely restraining herself from squealing as she jumps to hug her mother as best as she can, wrapping her arms around her waist. Alice chuckles, patting her daughter's head. Arnika mumbles, voice muffled as her face is pressed against blue cloth, "I missed you."

The blonde pauses, a soft smile on her face. "I missed you too, dear."

When Arnika finally lets go of her mother, Alice immediately notices the doll on her shoulder. "Oh, what may that be?"

The dollmaker beams. "This is Sayo. I made her myself! Sayo, Sayo, say hi." Obediently, the doll rises up into the air slightly, waving her little arm in a greeting. Arnika can't help but grin, and Alice can't help but clap her hands together in delight.

"She's wonderful! Did you make her yourself?" Alice reaches out to catch the doll in her hands, doing so ever gracefully. Sayo lands in her cupped hands, looking up at Alice, technically her grandmother, almost curiously.

"Kind of," Arnika murmurs, almost bashfully. Her heart is bursting at the praise, and she wants nothing more than to puff her chest out and announce it to the whole world, but she *is* in the library, and she's not supposed to be loud. "I read some books... they kinda helped... or something."

Just as Alice is about to say something else, a soft patter on the library floorboards echo throughout the room. Alice looks up, over

Arnika, and a large, genuine smile blooms in her face. "Patchouli."

The librarian looks up slightly, for once, not really caring about the height difference. "Alice."

Quite immediately, the blonde rushes over to wrap Patchouli in a tight squeeze, nearly lifting her up in the air as she does so. After a moment of hesitation, Patchouli awkwardly returns the hug, smiling lightly. "Just so you know, Arnika isn't the only one who missed you."

"Good, else I'll have to find a new wife," Alice murmurs, chin resting on the librarian's shoulder. She lets out a sigh - long and contented - and remains there for a minute or two before deigning to let go.

"Suppose you don't know the news I have for you?"

Arnika toddles over curiously, Sayo floating beside her. The doll's movements are still a little jointed and stiff, as if new to the whole thing (which she is), and so Alice bends down to whisper a quick incantation. Almost immediately, Sayo's eyes brighten, her movements more human-like, and a little smile blossoms on her petite face. Arnika grins massively, refrains from squealing, and cuddles the newly-enchanted doll to her chest.

Patchouli smiles lightly, an eyebrow arched. "News? Is it about your work?"

"You can put it that way." The puppeteer returns the smile and pulls out her grimoire. It's still tightly sealed, as always, but something looks... different about it. Patchouli can't quite put her finger on the word, but it's definitely something. "I went over to the Kirisame's, you remember? With their help, I managed to fix something up for... next week." Her blue eyes narrow, but a little simper is on her face. "That is, with a little bribing, we've got three magicians to help out with this one."

"Isn't next week my birthday?" Arnika blurts out, eyes wide. "You told me I could come with you and visit Aunt Marisa and Aunt Nitori, right?"

"Yes, yes you are." The blonde bends down to pat her head lightly. "It's just that, well, birthdays have gifts, and I've never missed out on giving you a gift." A smile. "This year won't be any different."

"A gift!" The dollmaker grins, Sayo twirling in the air beside her. "Uwah... that sounds nice..."

"Doesn't it?" Then the puppeteer looks over at the grand double doors and says, "You can come in, now."

Another blonde figure walks through, this one dressed in black and white, and an ever-present grin on her face. "Whoa! That you, Arni? You were just a kid last time I saw ya!"

"Aunt Marisa!" And the dollmaker's flung herself towards the witch as well, clinging to her midsection. "Good - Good day! D-Did you bring new spells?"

"Sure I did, kiddo." Marisa's grin grows, and she whips out a grimoire Arnika hasn't seen ever since a few months ago. Behind her, she can hear Patchouli make some sort of annoyed growling noise. "Thanks for this, Patche! Sure has been a while since I read some of your writing among all a' these books. I've copied everythin' here right down to the footnote, so you can have it back."

"You filthy..."

"Let's play, Aunt Marisa!" Arnika interjects, not very intent on hearing what the rest of the magician has to say. Marisa bends down and scoops the dollmaker up by her armpits, whispers something in her ear, and then reveals her old, worn broom. Arnika suppresses a squeal for the near-millionth time. Alice lets out a sigh.

the name "arnika" was taken from the herb "arnica", chosen so because of the alliteration between alice and arnica, and because patche's name is also an herb.

i didn't have time to draw a better (?) version of arni so just have the slightly outdated version where the filename still says "arunika" -
imgur . com / I5WFy9K . png

if you ask: yes, sayo is an even more blatant reference to miki
sayaka what were you expecting (as if the ayahata kids' names and
color themes weren't obvious enough lmao)

kudos to cheinsaw who drew sayaka and ryouko! -
sentretlegion.tumblr.com/post/108959275748/ (yeah thats my tumblr
MY SECRET IS OUT)

"big sis ranishi" is a flankoi child and "the singing bird youkai" is a
mystia/rumia child whoops future plans spilled (also yes marisa/nitori
is a thing but i haven't designed their child/ren yet)

Family

Chapter 3: Family

--Requested by PrincessPatche

Big news is brought, and a half-raven does her duties for the year admirably.

(See the end of the chapter for notes.)

"Shrine~ maiden~ work~! Shrine~ maiden~ work!"

If there's something Mikoto wants to do, it's to head on down to the reactor and play around with it. Sadly, as Mom always (and by always, she means *a/ways*) says, shrine maiden work comes first. After all, she's the next Hakurei maiden when Mom dies, so she has to get used to it as soon as she can.

And anyway, it is still pretty fun! And so Mikoto sweeps the leaves away. Ah, it's almost winter, she's going to be able to bundle up and sleep by the kotatsu with Mom and Mama again. That's always nice. It's even better when Auntie Mari and Auntie Remi sometimes come over to "leech off my tea supply" (which is something Mom always says, too, usually followed by a "damned youkai and humans who remind me too much of youkai"). But these days, whenever Auntie Ari comes, she brings along her daughter too, a girl with purple hair and a nice dress, and then they play around until Aunt Ari has to leave for reasons.

Sometimes, too, she remembers that Aunt Aya and Aunt Hata bring their daughters over too, both older than her by a few years. The one with longer brown hair is all fun and knows ("way too many") games, but the one with shorter black hair refuses to do anything. When the

weather's bad for outside play, though, Mikoto and Sayaka (is that her name?) entertain themselves by teasing Ryouko (or was it Kyouko...?) about whatever pops in their heads.

What she does think is Nice, however, is when she gets to fly! It's always fun! But Mom says that she's not allowed to fly, since she might "lose control" or something weird like that, and even though Mikoto doesn't really get it, she doesn't want to break Mom's rules and risk a scolding. Again.

But Mom says that when she grows up enough to become responsible ("unlike your other mother"), Mikoto can fly and go around by herself! Well, alright, maybe not exactly always by herself, but it's going to be amazing! She'll finally be able to feel the wind on her cheeks and soar and swoop in the sky like never before. She's only gone flying twice - once because she had to get up to the shrine, and the other because she fell off the shrine roof. That had been embarrassing. But the feeling of flying had stayed with her ever since, and so that was how it started.

... Ah, she had gotten distracted. Oh, well. Sweep! Sweep! She likes it especially when it's windy outside, where she can close her eyes and pretend she's flying, no obligations, no responsibilities--

Fwoosh!

"... Hmm? Mikoto?"

Ah! That voice, it's... she opens her bright red eyes and blinks over at the tall figure in front of her, black raven wings spread out behind the hell raven. A grin blooms on her face. "Mama!"

Utsuho Hakurei giggles and hugs the much smaller half-raven, especially in contrast to her. "Hello, hello, good morning, Mikoto! It's a lovely day outside, the sun's shining and it's very windy and everything!"

"It is, isn't it! But the wind's been blowing all the leaves away!"

"Ah, that can't be good. Do you want me to burn them up for you?"

"... Hmm." Mikoto thinks about it a while - she supposes it does seem like a nice solution, but Mom might get mad at the smoke and ask Mikoto why the grass is all brown like it always gets whenever she wants to practice her danmaku. "Nah! 'M sure it'll be fine. And Mom'll get mad."

"Ooh, good point." Utsuho deflates a little, but springs back up into her good mood in an instant. "Speaking of Reimu! Is she here right now? I've got something I wanna tell her really really bad!"

The younger half-raven's mouth drops open. "B-Bad news?!"

"No! It's good news that I wanna tell her!"

"Oh, I get it!" She grins and giggles, then pauses. "Ah, then, what is it?"

"Well, it's--" Utsuho stops, seems to ponder over it for a little, before shaking her head, smiling all the while. "Nope! Can't tell you, sorry!" She bends down to pat her daughter's head. "Don't worry, if Reimu is okay with it, I can tell you soon! And it'll be very good news, I hope!"

Mikoto nods. Yes, yes, it does seem like a good plan. And she's sure Mom'll be happy! After all, Mom's always happy whenever Mama comes up to the surface. It's a little rare that Utsuho can stay up for very long, because she has the reactor to always take care of, though she's been getting better at operating it from a certain distance, or so she says. Even so, whenever Mikoto gets to be in one of the conversations with her parents, Reimu always looks a lot happier than when she's sipping tea by herself.

It makes Mikoto all warm and fuzzy inside, too.

"Hi, Mikoto~! "

It's *loud*!

Of course, it's just Mama. In retrospect (whatever that's supposed to mean, but Ryouko's said it before), Mikoto should have expected it. It's happened dozens of times whenever Mama's excited. Which is right now. Ooh, could it be?!

Utsuho swoops down to land in front of the half-raven, her galactic cape swirling and sparkling around her and generally looking awesome. There's also a big giant grin on her face, which kind of breaks the whole "cool" thing, but it's so *Mama* that it just makes Mikoto smile even bigger. "Mikoto, Mikoto, guess what!"

"What?!"

"I'm pregnant! Again!"

Ah, Mikoto hadn't encountered that word in school yet. Hmm, there was the word 'egg' in it... "Are we going to eat eggs for dinner?! I like eggs!"

"... Ehh? No, that's not it!" Utsuho laughs, a chiming sound that makes Mikoto laugh too even though she's basically laughing at herself for some reason. "I'm pregnant! That is, you're going to have a sister!"

A sister!

"A sister!"

It sounds nice! Mama and Auntie Orin are sisters, and Mom and Auntie Mari are kind of like sisters too, and Sayaka and Ryouko are sisters, even though they fight a lot and make it look like they're more archenemies than anything. But still! A sister! A younger sibling! Her excitement is spreading all over her body, making her jump up and down excitedly and beat her tiny raven wings. "That's! Really nice! I'm gonna have a sister... I'm gonna have a sister!" A whoop,

and another leap into the air. She fights down the temptation to fly right into the air like Mama, if only for Mom's sake. "I'm gonna teach her and play with her and protect her from bullies and everything! Whoa! I'm gonna be just like Ryouko!"

"Yeah, yeah you are!" Utsuho cheers, and soon the two are a duo of frenzied excitement until Reimu comes out of the shrine a blushing mess and shushes them so she can break out the sake that Suika so very kindly lent them.

"Mama's pregnant!" is basically the first thing Mikoto tells everyone and anyone who decides to pass by the shrine. It's August when the news had been broken to her, and so Mom tells her that her new baby sister (*baby sister!* She still can't believe it) will be arriving around April. She can't wait! It's so long off, and every hour feels like a decade, but all the days are so much more colorful and every time she talks, she can't help but light up! She feels like she's flying without needing to fly!

And, oh, what a thought: once her baby sister (!) is born, and Mikoto would take responsibility and care for her while Mom and Mama can't, then Mom would *surely* see how responsible Mikoto is and allow her to fly around by herself! Then she can teach her sister how to fly, too, so they can fly together, and oh *goodness* does the thought fill her with such joy!

Everyone's all happy and nice about the news too, like Auntie Mari, who squeals and hugs Mom and says that the frickling and frackling was worth it, and Mom goes beet red - though Mikoto's not sure why, because frickling and frackling aren't words, are they? Aunt Ari comes over when the weather's especially cold for some tea, too, with Arnika, and though Mikoto doesn't see Aunt Ari's reaction, Arnika looks pretty happy for her as well. Ahh - what a wonderful world she lives in!

August passes into September, which soon turns into October - it's the peak of autumn, where all the leaves are turning orange and

raining about, and where people start wearing fluffy clothes. Mikoto borrows a very big winter coat from Mom and some gloves, because her hands get pretty cold easily, though she's not sure why. At one point, she tried to heat the place up a little bit by blowing off some of her danmaku again, but all she got from that is a burnt tree and a scolding from Mom.

Then on a particularly snowy day on November, where the half-raven has to stay inside the shrine lest she catch a cold, and as she's hiding underneath the kotatsu during an intense game of hide-and-seek with Auntie Suika, Mama comes over with Auntie Orin and Grandma! It's the strangest thing ever, because Auntie Orin and Grandma (though she always insists Mikoto call her just Satori) never come up to the surface to visit, and when they do, it's usually only for urgent matters or to buy groceries. But! They're visiting! And it's very very cold! Mikoto's made them her bestest hot tea ever.

"It has come to my attention that Okuu is pregnant. Again." Satori blows on her tea, before taking a tentative sip. Her expression doesn't change, but Rin makes a delighted face, and so Mikoto is quite proud of herself.

"No, I found out as soon as Okuu did. I helped her with the pregnancy test and everything."

A stare. Reimu takes a sip of her tea as well, before placing it back down on the table.

"Hmm? I can assure you, I have absolutely no problems with this. After all, another addition to the family is equal to another bundle of joy in our lives."

A beat of silence. In the distance, Rin unties Mikoto's ponytail and braids her hair while humming a soft tune.

"I agree. In any case, there is something I must tell you." Satori leans forward, setting her cup down on the table as well. "You are

financially sustained by us due to your circumstances. That is true, yes?"

A nod.

"With just Mikoto, we can handle it, and our expenses have been minimal and manageable. However, with another child into the Hakurei family, that might double the money and food we've been giving you for all this time." A frown creeps up her face. "Trust us. We don't mind at all, especially if this is to help our family, and we've grown quite fond of you... as fond as we youkai can get to humans, anyway. But our funds will start running a little low, bit by bit, until we'll start living like you. The problem with that is that Mikoto and her future younger sister need daily nutrition like healthy young children, and if they don't get that..."

Reimu's brow furrows. Her hands grip her cup of tea a little tighter.

"... Well. There's just nothing else I can very much think of that would earn one or both of us more money, except if you perhaps send Mikoto out on odd jobs for the occasional change, but even that wouldn't be enough..."

"I can do that!"

The sudden voice makes both of them jump. Before the two of them sits Mikoto, wings flapping behind her. A grin grows. "I like working and making people happy! And others're always complaining about stuff they can fix, but don't wanna! Like how Auntie Mari always says going to the Human Village is such a chore 'cause a lot of people look at her weird, or Arni saying that she wants more materials for her dolls, but she doesn't wanna go to the Village either. So! If I can do stuff like that, I can get more money, can't I? And then I can help and both of you can be happy!"

A long pause makes Mikoto's grin drop slightly. "I-I mean, uh, i-if that's okay and everythin'..."

"Mikoto," Reimu says, sighing. Her tired look is coming back, the half-raven notices. "It's great that you want to... to help others and such, but even if you were to do that, it wouldn't very much--"

"Actually," Satori interrupts, her expression thoughtful. "I think that could work."

"I'm Mikoto of the Reiuji family! I'm here to help with your jobs!"

She doesn't exactly know why she's introducing herself as Mikoto Reiuji, but Grandma says it'll work, and although the plan Grandma told her sounded a little scary, she'd do a lot of things to help Mom. This should be only for a while anyway, right?

The farmer looks down at her, frowning slightly. "Reiuji? Like that crazy hell raven down in the Underground? Heh... no way I'd allow you getting anywhere near my stuff. You'd burn it to ashes!"

Mikoto clears her throat, prepares herself mentally, then does the funny little trick Auntie Mari taught her. With a beat of her wings (*EEK!* She just barely resists the temptation to swoop up into the sky), she hovers up just enough to be level with the human farmer and hisses, her voice as low as she can get it to be; "Not accepting my help? Maybe I'll burn *you* to ashes instead if you don't let me work and get my pay. Or perhaps your head can be my pay..."

Ahh, scary.

It looks like it worked, though; the farmer looks scared out of his pants and his next words are broken, stuttered; "Y-Yeah, sure, just-- it's my crops, t-they're, uh, water, I just--"

In a flash, Mikoto's back on the ground, even though the momentary feeling of euphoria is still buzzing around her. A bright smile is immediately plastered on her face. "Water your crops in the field near the Bamboo Forest since you're too busy to go to? Sure! Just make sure to pay me what it's worth, *or else*, okay~?"

Through that, she gets quite a bit of money through the same method, and some new friends! That is, if she can call them friends. There's a lady near the Bamboo Forest with long ribboned white hair and red pants and always looks moody, but when Mikoto gets lost sometimes, the white-haired lady (she can't remember her name right now -- it sounded a little like peach?) helps her outside. There's also the funny-looking rabbit lady in the pink dress and carrot charm, but thankfully, Mikoto can fly right over her pitfall traps, so it's not *too* dangerous.

By the time Christmas comes, Mikoto's saved up a sizable amount of yen, from which she uses to buy gifts. A pretty sun necklace for Mama, and a new set of teacups for Mom, and a shiny yellow headband for Grandma... it's a long list, suffice to say.

The best thing is that when it *is* December 25, a lot of people Mikoto's never seen before, along with some she *has* met, are gathered at the shrine, drinking the funny-smelling drink, going all red in the face, and subsequently (did she use that word right?) pressing their faces together. Mikoto doesn't think she wants to grow up if that's what grown-ups do, but they all look like they're having fun and Mom and Mama and everyone else she bought gifts for is all smiles when they open her gifts, so it's not all bad.

Sayaka and Ryouko visit for the first time then, too, ever since Mikoto got the news about her baby sister, and so she's telling Sayaka everything about it while Ryouko supervises them, since Auntie Hata is "getting all motherly again" and insists they stay outside where no one can influence them to drink the funny water Auntie Suika always has. Sayaka is excited; Ryouko is unimpressed. Mikoto tells the elder crow tengu how much she's going to have to learn from her, but Ryouko just looks annoyed. Sayaka starts ranting at Ryouko to be nicer to her friends, and very soon, the two of them are arguing again. It happens all the time, so Mikoto sits back and waits for the fun to start.

They're both older than her by a couple years, give or take, and so they're also allowed to use their danmaku, though they still don't have spell cards. Sayaka's are curved leaves and a pretty sky blue, while Ryouko's are bigger and sharper and redder, which means Ryouko's danmaku usually cuts right through Sayaka's and hits her straight-on. Sometimes, the younger tengu gets herself the upper-hand by sending thick waves of them (though she still loses control over them and the bullets always disappear whenever she's hit), but more often than not, it's Ryouko who wins their little spats.

After a game of tag with Sayaka and Auntie Shin, who Mikoto's in charge of taking care of while huge events like this are going on, Mama comes back out to squeeze Mikoto in a super-tight hug and exclaim that she's so very proud of her daughter and she hopes that Mikoto will stay as Mikoto for the rest of her life because Mikoto is Mikoto and that's all that matters. Mama's very red in the face, too, and she'd just come back from a talk with Mom, so the half-raven reckons something happened there, but she accepts the hug anyway, because hugs are nice and warm, and if they're given by nice and warm people like Mama, they're even nicer and warmer!

Her New Year's Resolution: "I hope I can be a good older sibling for my baby sister!"

mikoto is taken from Kamo Taketsunimi no Mikoto, founder of the Kamo-Agatanushi clan, and is also said to be the incarnation of the yatagarasu - he supposedly changed himself into a great crow during the war, consequently ending it. (yea i did my research)

hello princess!! i hope this is to your standards lol

i'm too lazy to draw a good reference for mikoto, so here's a doodl of her from my tumblr: sentretlegion.tumblr.com/post/109292499778/ (the lines on her sleeves should be green and the lines on her skirt should be white i just got lazy there too ahhh)

by the way the line wherein mikoto thinks mokou's name sounds like peach is because peach is momo in jap??? idk it was funnier in my head (its prob an old joke tho)
